



A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

NO. 23

10¢

All of love's most wondrous moments are told in these intimate, long-to-be-remembered romance picture-stories!

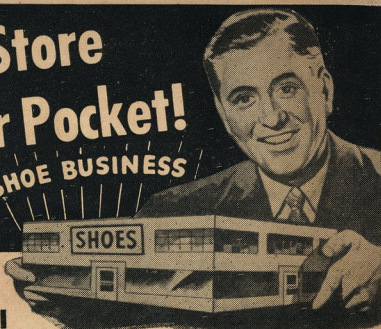


WEB COMIC
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Build a Fine Business... Full or Spare Time!

I'll Put a "Shoe Store Business" in Your Pocket!

SHOE BUSINESS



You Don't Invest a Cent!
I Furnish Everything Free!

Want to have lots of money in your pocket—always? Then rush the coupon below and start toward your own business. In many ways it's better than a retail store of your own! I plan to give it to you absolutely FREE. You don't invest a penny now or ever! Be in this highly profitable business QUICK.

HERE'S WHY IT'S BETTER!

As the direct factory man handling the quick-selling line of this 47-year old, million-dollar company you have a limitless market, because everybody wears shoes. Start by selling to relatives, friends, neighbors. That will prove the fine quality leathers—superb craftsmanship—money-saving value—and unequalled comfort-fit! Then branch out on a big scale.

It's easy to fit folks in the exact style they want—no need to substitute—you draw on our huge factory stock of over 175,000 pairs plus huge daily factory production.

Sales build up from friend to friend quickly, like a snowball. Recommendations, repeat orders and new customers build you a big income in a surprisingly short time. No wonder some of our top Shoe Counselors make from \$5 to \$10 every hour they spend taking orders!

EXCLUSIVE FEATURES

People demand nationally advertised Mason Shoes because of their exclusive comfort features, up-to-the-minute styling. Foamy-soft exclusive Velvet-Eez Air Cushion innersole makes walking a real pleasure—like "walking on air!" Ten-second demonstration lets customer actually feel air cushion, brings quick sales!

These splendid shoes bear famous Good Housekeeping Guarantee Seal.



Velvet-eez
TRADE MARK OF PAT. OFF.

MASON SHOE MFG. CO.
Dept. MA215, Chippewa Falls, Wisc.

BIG, STEADY PROFITS FOR YOU — NO OVERHEAD!

That's right! You have all the advantages of a profitable shoe store business *without* the expenses of rent, light, heat, etc. You are independent and invest nothing but your time. Your generous profit is ALL YOURS! No wonder Mason men are making more money than ever before. Even if you start in spare time, you will soon want to devote full time to this steady, repeat-order big-income business!

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You need no experience to make money right away. Some men have made up to 20 sales their first day. You feature 151 styles of smart dress shoes, casual sport shoes, and practical work and service shoes for men and women, boots and fine leather jackets, too.

Sell to service station and garage men, waiters, factory workers, barbers, waitresses, nurses, housewives—everybody! Such features as Rugged Horsehide Shoes, Neoprene Oil-Resistant Soles, Gro-Cork Slip-Resistant Soles, Steel Safety Toe shoes make Mason Shoes easy to sell.

SEND NOW!

I have a powerful Selling Outfit I'm going to send you absolutely FREE as soon as I receive your coupon. This outfit includes actual 10-second demonstrator, famous Automatic Selling Plan, and features exclusive Velvet-Eez Air-Cushion shoes, fine leather jackets—other fast-selling specialties. To take advantage of this opportunity of your life, rush me the coupon below NOW! You'll be glad you did!



SEND FOR FREE OUTFIT

Mr. Ned Mason, Sales Manager
Mason Shoe Mfg. Co., Dept. MA-215
Chippewa Falls, Wisc.

Please put a "Shoe Store Business" in my pocket by rushing FREE and postpaid your Powerful Selling Outfit—so I can start making Big Money my very first hour!

Name

Age

Address

Town..... State.....

ROMANTIC STORY

Volume 1, Number 23

May, 1954

Published bimonthly by Charlton Comics Group. Executive offices and office of publication Charlton Building, Derby, Conn. Application for entry as second class matter pending at Post Office at Derby, Conn. Price per copy 10c. Subscription 12 issues \$1.20. Copyright 1954 by Charlton Comics Group. Designed by Al Fago Studios! Printed in the U.S.A.

ROMANTIC STORY

The following outstanding magazines are easily identified on their covers by the words A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

ATOMIC MOUSE • COWBOY WESTERN HEROES • CRIME AND JUSTICE • FUNNY ANIMALS
 EMI dig this crazy comic • HAUNTED • HOT ROBS AND RACING CARS • ZOO FUNNIES
 LASH LARUE WESTERN • ROCKY LANE WESTERN • RACKET SQUAD • SNA-GUN HEROES
 ROMANTIC STORY • SCIENCE-FICTION SPACE ADVENTURES • STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES
 SWEETHEARTS • TEN RITTER WESTERN • TRUE LIFE SECRETS • TV TEENS • THE THING

Every effort is made to insure that these comic magazines contain the highest quality of wholesome entertainment.

JENNY LONGED TO TELL the secret that kept her a fugitive from happiness...from the love of this man she adored...but she dared not! She seemed destined to remain a

GIRL IN HIDING!

JENNY...
 NOW THAT WE
 LOVE EACH OTHER...
 YOU'VE GOT TO TELL
 ME THE TRUTH! WHAT
 ARE YOU RUNNING AWAY
 FROM? IS IT THE LAW?
 TELL ME JENNY...
 TELL ME!

SOS... NO!
 NO, I WON'T TELL
 YOU! YOU DON'T
 LOVE ME AT ALL!
 THIS IS ALL YOU
 CARE TO FIND
 OUT!

WEARIED FROM THE STEAM AND GRIME OF THE DINER KITCHEN WHERE I WORKED, I MADE MY WAY ALONG THE NARROW STREET TO MY QUARTERS IN AN OBSCURE ROOMINGHOUSE...

IT'S A MISERABLE HOVEL TO LIVE IN...AS BAD AS THE DINER KITCHEN... BUT IT'S OUT OF SIGHT OF PRYING EYES. I WON'T BE FOUND OUT...EXPOSED!

I NEVER RECKONED ON THE QUIRKS OF FATE. FOR IN THE DEAD OF THAT NIGHT, A STRANGE, ACRID ODOOR ASSAILED MY NOSTRILS... AND CRIES OF ALARM DREW ME TO THE DOOR...

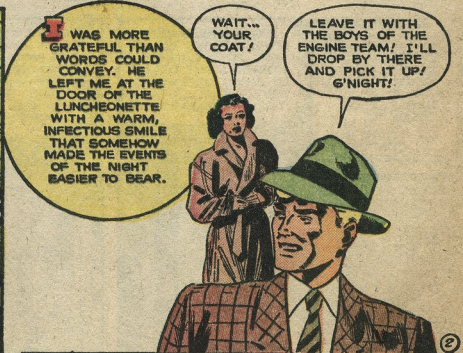
FIRE! THE HOUSE IS BURNING!

THE PASSAGE DOWN IS A SOLID SHEET OF FLAME!

ROMANTIC STORY



I WEPT PITEOUSLY AS HE PLACED THE TRENCHCOAT GENTLY AROUND MY TREMBLING SHOULDERS AND LED ME BY THE ARM. AFTER SEVERAL CUPS OF COFFEE I MANAGED TO REGAIN CONTROL OF MYSELF, AND...



ROMANTIC STORY



ROMANTIC STORY

BUT I WAS UNNECESSARILY ALARMED...HE DIDN'T QUESTION ME AT ALL. IT WAS A PERFECT EVENING, AND ITS MOST PERFECT MOMENT WAS THE GENTLE GOOD NIGHT MEETING OF OUR LIPS BEFORE MY DOOR...



I'M GOING TO SAY A LOT OF THINGS TO YOU IN MY DREAMS TONIGHT THAT I DIDN'T HAVE THE NERVE TO SAY IN PERSON!

THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING WONDERFUL FOR ME! BUT DARE I HOPE FOR ANYTHING LIKE THIS AFTER ALL THAT'S HAPPENED?



THE FOLLOWING MONDAY HE PICKED ME UP WHERE I WORKED, AND HE WAS VISIBLY DISTURBED. I HADN'T EXPECTED HIM TO COME INSIDE... BUT I WAS TOO LATE IN GETTING OUT OF THE KITCHEN.



ALL READY, DICK. SORRY TO BE LATE, I...WHAT'S WRONG?

THIS DOESN'T SEEM TO BE THE KIND OF A JOB A GIRL LIKE YOU OUGHT TO HAVE.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT, DICK?

GOSH! ALWAYS ON THE DEFENSIVE! I... I GUESS I JUST THINK THE BEST IN EVERYTHING ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU!

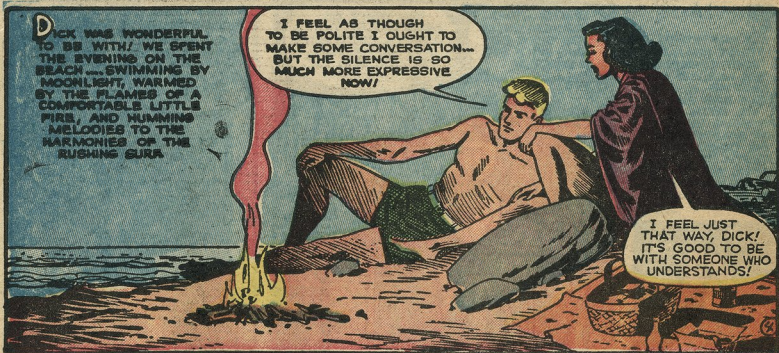


STEP LIVELY! WE HAVE A FULL PROGRAM FOR THIS EVENING! FIRST, OVER TO YOUR PLACE TO PICK UP A SWIM SUIT!



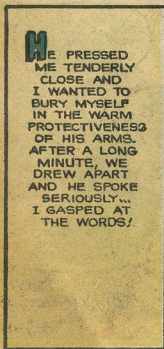
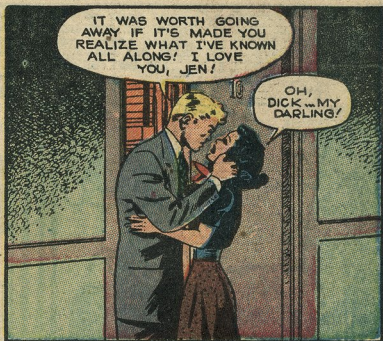
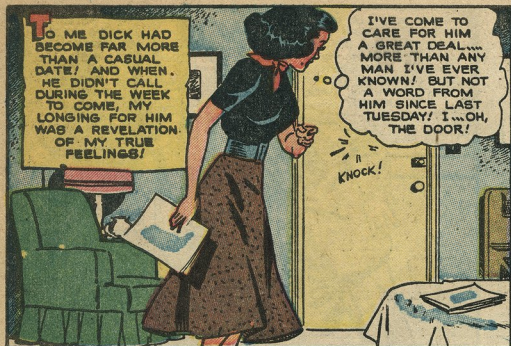
DICK WAS WONDERFUL TO BE WITH! WE SPENT THE EVENING ON THE BEACH...SWIMMING BY MOONLIGHT, WARMED BY THE FLAMES OF A COMFORTABLE LITTLE FIRE, AND HUMMING MELODIES OF THE HARMONIES OF THE RUSHING SURF.

I FEEL AS THOUGH TO BE POLITE I OUGHT TO MAKE SOME CONVERSATION... BUT THE SILENCE IS SO MUCH MORE EXPRESSIVE NOW!



I FEEL JUST THAT WAY, DICK! IT'S GOOD TO BE WITH SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS!

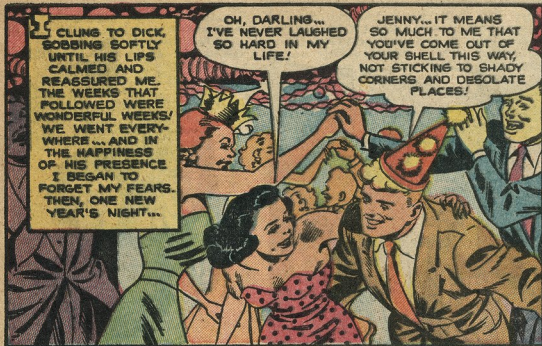
ROMANTIC STORY



ROMANTIC STORY



ROMANTIC STORY

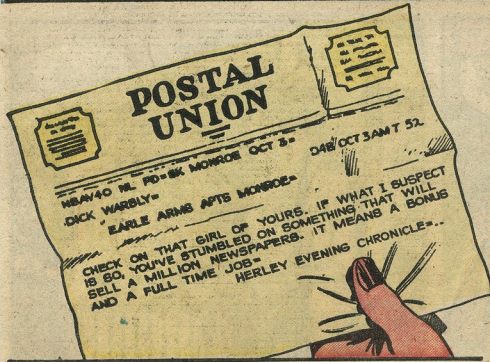
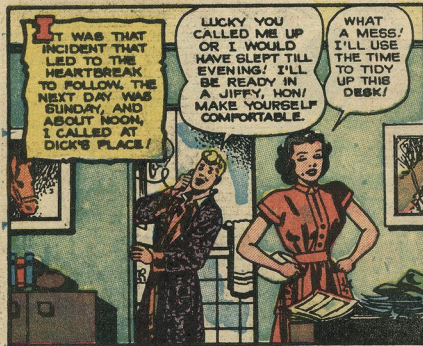


I IN THE MIDST OF ALL THAT JUBILATION... I FELT A QUIET SERENITY INSIDE MYSELF THAT TRANSPORTED ME TO A WORLD OF OUR OWN. OUR LIPS MET AND SAVORED A LONG, LINGERING KISS THAT LASTED MINUTES AFTER THE OTHERS HAD STOPPED!



ROMANTIC STORY

THE MAN'S EYES STUDIED ME UNTIL I HAD TO TURN AWAY! THEN SUDDENLY MY FEAR RETURNED TO SEAR MY SENSES LIKE A FLAME!



ROMANTIC STORY

THAT ISN'T TRUE! BUT JUST WHAT IS YOUR STORY? I HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW! GOOD LORD...SELL A MILLION PAPERS! IT MUST BE SOMETHING BIG! YOU'RE THE GIRL I EXPECT TO MARRY, JENNY... TELL ME THE TRUTH!



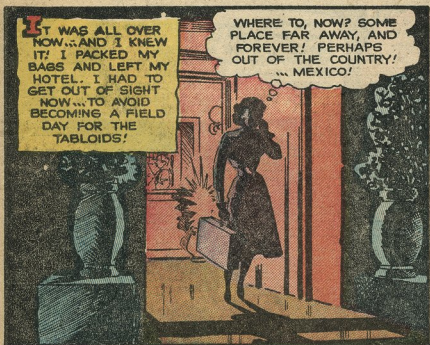
I... I WON'T TELL! I WON'T!

JENNY... WAIT!



IT WAS ALL OVER NOW...AND I KNEW IT! I PACKED MY BAGS AND LEFT MY HOTEL. I HAD TO GET OUT OF SIGHT NOW...TO AVOID BECOMING A FIELD DAY FOR THE TABLOIDS!

WHERE TO, NOW? SOME PLACE FAR AWAY, AND FOREVER! PERHAPS OUT OF THE COUNTRY! MEXICO!



MOTHER... ONLY TO SEE HER, TO TALK TO HER FOR ONE MOMENT! IT'S BEEN SO LONG THAT I'VE BEEN AWAY FROM HOME...ALMOST A YEAR! WHO KNOWS WHEN I CAN SEE HER AGAIN? AND SHE ISN'T WELL!



I... I WILL SEE HER! I'LL SNEAK INTO TOWN... AND GET OUT BY MORNING!



AND SO, LIKE SOME COMMON CRIMINAL, I RETURNED TO MY HOME TOWN... TO THE PLACE WHERE MY AILING MOM LIVED. I OPENED THE DOOR TO THE APARTMENT, AND THERE...



MOM, I... OH! MR. DEKKER!

SO YOU FINALLY DECIDED TO LOOK IN ON YOUR MOTHER! WELL... AS YOU CAN SEE, I'M FIXING UP THE APARTMENT FOR A NEW TENANT!



ROMANTIC STORY



MR. DEKKER, THE LANDLORD, HAD KNOWN ME SINCE I WAS A CHILD...AND HIS WRATH WAS THAT OF AN OUTRAGED PARENT! AS HIS WORDS ASSAILED ME, I BOWED MY HEAD WITH GRIEF.



ROMANTIC STORY



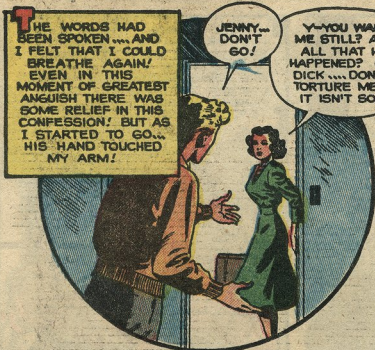
HABIT HAD ME GRIPPED IN A VISE AND I RESPONDED! I TOOK A TRAIN... AND FOR HOURS AND HOURS, IT'S WHEELS CHURNED AWAY MILES, TAKING ME AWAY FROM EVERYTHING I WANTED!



DURING THE FOLLOWING HOURS MY MIND WAS A CONFUSION OF CONFLICTING DESIRES... TO RUN, TO REMAIN, TO SEE DICK! I FELT LIKE A PERSON SINKING BENEATH A HEAVY WEIGHT. SOMEHOW, I FOUND MY WAY BACK TO DICK'S PLACE AND I RANG THE BELL...

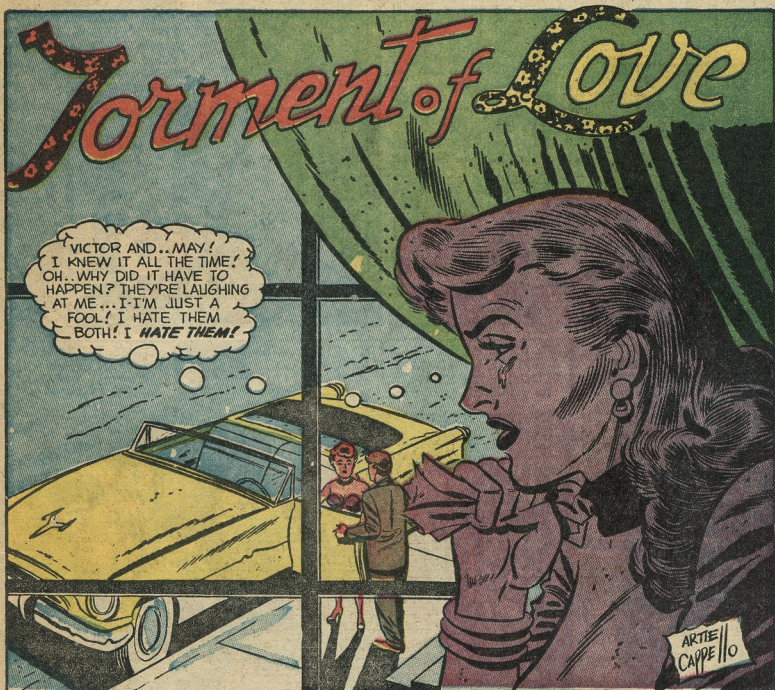


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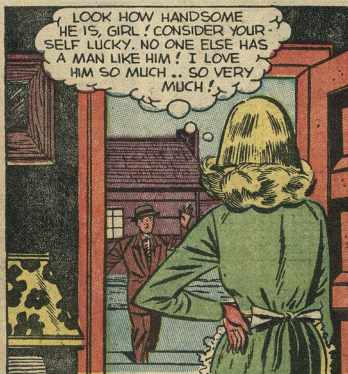


ROMANTIC STORY

IT GREW SLOWLY AND CUNNINGLY WITHIN ME. IT LAY IN WAIT TO POUNCE AND SQUEEZE AND DESTROY ALL THE LOVE AND HAPPINESS THAT WAS MY RIGHT TO SHARE. THEN, WHEN NOTHING BUT BITTER JEALOUSY AND HATE REMAINED, THE TERRIBLE ORDEAL BEGAN. THE ORDEAL THAT WAS MY...



LIKE MOST YOUNG COUPLES, VICTOR AND I HAD MARRIED FOR LOVE. NEITHER ONE OF US HAD MUCH MONEY, BUT MONEY DIDN'T MATTER TOO MUCH, SO LONG AS WE HAD EACH OTHER!



ROMANTIC STORY

THEY'LL SAY THAT MISTER AND MRS. CARLIN ARE WILD FOR EACH OTHER... JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIES! UMM... IS THAT CHICKEN DUMPLING I SMELL, MY RAVISHING SLAVE?

YES, SILLY! OH... AND SPRUCE UP TONIGHT, DEAR. THE NORMANS, CRANES, AND THE FIELDS ARE COMING! I WANT TO SHOW THEM HOW MARRIED LIFE AGREES WITH US!



IT SURE DOES, HONEY. ONLY I STILL HAVEN'T BOUGHT YOU THE **ONE** THING THAT WOULD MAKE IT RIGHT! BUT JUST YOU WAIT... I'LL BUY THAT RING FOR YOU IF I HAVE TO WORK DAY AND NIGHT!

DON'T BE SO DRAMATIC, SWEETHEART. YOUR SCHOOL RING WILL DO JUST AS NICELY FOR MY WEDDING RING. WE CAN'T AFFORD ANYTHING ELSE RIGHT NOW. BESIDES... ALL I WANT IS YOUR LOVE!



AND I MEANT EVERY WORD OF IT. VICTOR HAD A GOOD JOB, AND I HAD MY HANDS FULL WITH THE MODEST NEW COTTAGE WE BOUGHT ON MORTGAGE. BUT WHAT MADE EVERYTHING PERFECT WAS THE MANY WONDERFUL FRIENDS WE HAD. OUR SET WAS YOUNG, AMBITIOUS AND GAY. AND OUR EVENINGS WERE ALMOST ALWAYS CROWDED WITH LAUGHTER AND FUN...

ALL TOGETHER NOW... YO HO HO... AND A BOTTLE OF RUM! C'MON, WALL FLOWERS! WE PIRATES HAVE TO STICK TOGETHER!

ALWAYS THE LIFE OF THE PARTY! OH, VICTOR... I HOPE ALL THIS WILL NEVER CHANGE!



AND IT NEVER WOULD CHANGE SO LONG AS VICTOR HELD ME IN HIS ARMS AND LOVED ME. I HAD KNOWN MANY BOYS BEFORE VICTOR, AND I HAD KNOWN WHAT IT WAS TO WANT HAPPINESS. BUT NOW HAVING VICTOR AS MY VERY OWN WAS HAPPINESS... FINAL AND INDISPUTABLE!

I'LL NEVER SHARE YOU WITH ANYTHING OR ANYONE, DARLING. YOU'RE TOO MUCH A PART OF ME!

THEN LET'S HAVE ANOTHER KISS, SWEETHEART!



YES, WE COULD AFFORD TO BE SENTIMENTAL. OUR LOVE WAS LIKE A BLOOMING FLOWER THAT GREW BIGGER AND STRONGER EACH PASSING DAY. AND WE DIDN'T CARE WHO KNEW IT... UNTIL ONE EVENING AT A GATHERING AT THE CRANES...

VICTOR IS KISSING THAT GIRL! I... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! WHO IS SHE?



ROMANTIC STORY

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, DEAR. BUT DON'T WORRY. VICTOR AND MAY ARE OLD FRIENDS OF LONG STANDING..BUT STRICTLY EX-EVERYTHING! ..IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN, SHE'S BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T SHE?

Y-YES...VERY BEAUTIFUL... HE NEVER TOLD ME ABOUT HER...



STUNNED, UNCERTAIN OF MY FEELINGS, I MANAGED TO ACT CASUAL, PRETENDING NOT TO NOTICE THE OBVIOUS REGARD VICTOR AND MAY HAD FOR EACH OTHER. BUT WHEN HE ESCORTED HER TO HER CAR PARKED OUTSIDE, LATER THAT NIGHT, I COULDN'T HIDE MY MISERY MUCH LONGER...

HE'S STILL ATTRACTED TO HER. AND SHE'S DOING **EVERYTHING** SHE CAN TO GET HIM BACK!



THEN, AS IF HE HAD HEARD...

HONEY.. I WANT YOU TO MEET MAY STEVENS. SHE JUST CAME BACK TO TOWN AFTER A VERY SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS TOUR. MAY, DEAR, THIS IS THE WONDERFUL GIRL WHO FINALLY TRAPPED ME!

SO YOU'RE FRAN! I MUST SAY YOU HAVE ALL THE BAIT! CONGRATULATIONS! YOU COULDN'T HAVE FOUND A MORE WONDERFUL BOY!



I CONTAINED MYSELF AS BEST I COULD, NOT WANTING TO MAKE A SCENE IN FRONT OF THE OTHERS. BUT WHEN WE FINALLY GOT HOME...

HOW COULD YOU, VICTOR CARLIN? YOU MADE ME A LAUGHING STOCK FLIRTING WITH THAT.. HUSSY! I WON'T HAVE IT, DO YOU HEAR?

DON'T BE SILLY, HONEY. MAY AND I ARE NOTHING BUT GOOD FRIENDS NOW! WHY.. IT'S THE MOST FANTASTIC THING I EVER HEARD OF! GOOD GRIEF..HOW COULD YOU EVER SUSPECT ME OF THAT? I **MARRIED** YOU, DIDN'T I?



I FELT ASHAMED NOW THAT VICTOR EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO ME.. BUT I TRY AND UNDERSTAND HOW I FELT. THAT WAS WHY MY WORLD CAME TUMBLING DOWN ABOUT ME WHEN I IMPULSIVELY WENT TO VICTOR'S OFFICE THAT NEXT AFTERNOON TO APOLOGIZE! ..FOR WALKING OUT OF IT CAME... MAY STEVENS!

HELLO, FRAN. GOT TO RUSH. THAT HANDSOME HUSBAND OF YOURS CAN BE MIGHTY PERSUASIVE WHEN HE WANTS TO CHARM US POOR HELPLESS FEMALES!

HELPLESS AS A SWOOPING HAWK, SHE MEANS..OH.. WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

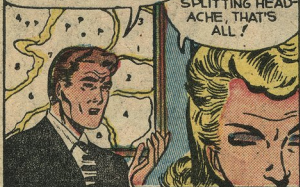


ROMANTIC STORY

I WALKED INSIDE, NOTICING ONLY THAT VICTOR WAS JUST AS SURPRISED TO SEE ME AS I HAD BEEN TO SEE MAY...

MAY'S A VERY SHREWD BUSINESS WOMAN.. BUT SHE THREW SOME BUSINESS MY WAY AFTER I TOLD HER ABOUT THE FIRM'S ANNUAL DIVIDENDS! HONEY... YOU'RE NOT LISTENING!

YES... IT'S JUST THAT I HAVE A SPLITTING HEAD-ACHE, THAT'S ALL!



THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE GNAWING HORROR THAT SLOWLY GREW WITHIN MY HEART. I LAY AWAKE AT NIGHTS THINKING, THINKING OF SOME WAY TO STOP MAY. BUT I KNEW SHE WAS TOO SMART, TOO BEAUTIFUL, AND WORLDLY-WISE TO BE TRAPPED BY A CLEAR-CUT FIGHT FOR VICTOR. DESPERATE, I PRAYED I COULD AGAIN BE MISTAKEN. BUT AT A PICNIC ONE AFTERNOON...

AND THIS IS FOR BEING SUCH A SMARTIE!

HA, HA! ENCORE, ENCORE!



I... I WAS RIGHT! OH-H... THERE MUST BE A WAY TO FIGHT! SHE CAN'T GET AWAY WITH IT! IF VICTOR EVER LEFT ME, I-I'D DIE!



GETTING ANGRY AT VICTOR WASN'T THE RIGHT WAY. I HAD TO USE CUNNING AND TACT, I HAD TO MAKE HIM WANT ME AS NEVER BEFORE. I HAD TO PROVE TO HIM THAT MY LOVE WAS GREATER THAN MAY'S! THEN, A FEW NIGHTS LATER...

TELL ME YOU LOVE ME, DARLING. YOU NEVER SEEM TO FIND TIME FOR ME ANY MORE!

I'VE BEEN WORKING HARD, FRAN. YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU, BABY... ALWAYS!



YOU PROMISE NOTHING WILL EVER COME BETWEEN US? AM I STILL AS BEAUTIFUL TO YOU, VICTOR?

WELL... MAYBE NOT LIKE MAY, BUT TEN TIMES AS CUTE, HONEY! NOW CUT IT OUT! WHAT'S COME OVER YOU? OF COURSE, YOU'RE GORGEOUS! YOU'LL ALWAYS BE TO ME... AND NOTHING'S EVER GOING TO CHANGE IT!



HOW DARED HE MENTION MAY AND ME IN THE SAME BREATH? HOW DARED HE BE SO TWO-FACED? MY ANGER CHANGED INTO HATE NOW... A HATE FOR MAY, AND FURIOUS INDIGNATION FOR VICTOR. THEY WERE GOING TO PAY FOR MAKING ME SUFFER LIKE THIS! I CRIED MYSELF TO SLEEP THAT NIGHT...

I'LL SHOW THEM! (SOB) I'LL MAKE THEM BOTH WANT TO CRAWL AWAY OUT OF EMBARRASSMENT!



ROMANTIC STORY

BUT I BIDD MY TIME..WAITING... THEN ONE EVENING AT A PARTY IN VICTOR'S HONOR...

LATE EVEN FOR HIS BIRTHDAY PARTY! NEITHER ONE OF THEM IS HERE! I SUPPOSE THEY'LL HAVE A GOOD EXCUSE!



AND JUST AS I PICKED UP THE PHONE TO CALL HIS OFFICE, VICTOR WALKED IN, ALL SMILES AND A PICTURE OF HUSBANDLY AFFECTION!

SORRY ABOUT NOT GETTING HERE ON TIME, HONEY!

I'M GLAD YOU DECIDED TO SHOW UP AT ALL! YOUR GUESTS AND I THOUGHT YOUR ..WORK WAS KEEPING YOU AWAY!



VICTOR SEEMED UNUSUALLY PUZZLED BY THAT REMARK, BUT I HAD A THEORY I WAS WAITING TO SEE COME TRUE, AND WHEN MY SWEET INTO THE ROOM MINUTES LATER, KISSING VICTOR BREEZILY AS IF SHE WISHED HIM WELL ON HIS BIRTHDAY, I DECIDED THE SHOWDOWN WAS TO BE HERE AND NOW!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, VICTOR! HOPE I'M NOT LATE FOR ANYTHING. I WOULDN'T WANT TO MISS THE FUN!

YOU WON'T, MAY... I **PROMISE** YOU! VICTOR SEEMS TO BE A SPECIAL HABIT OF YOURS, DOESN'T HE? DON'T THINK I'VE BEEN SO STUPID NOT TO KNOW WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON BEHIND MY BACK!



HOW COULD YOU SAY SUCH A THING, FRAN? WE'RE ALL GOOD FRIENDS! I-I'M SORRY IF I'VE OFFENDED YOU!

YOU'RE SORRY, WHAT A LAUGH! YOU'VE CHASED AFTER VICTOR SINCE THE MOMENT YOU CAME BACK! AND HOW CONVENIENT FOR BOTH OF YOU TO TURN UP SO LATE!



BUT I'VE JUST COME FROM THE HAIR-DRESSER'S! HOW COULD YOU ACCUSE ME OF SUCH A THING? I-I FEEL TERRIBLE!

I WANT YOU TO APOLOGIZE TO MAY. THIS VERY INSTANT!



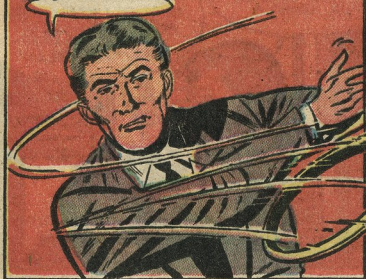
FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT I WOULD FAINT OUT OF SHEER ANGER! I DIDN'T CARE NOW IF THE OTHERS HAD STOPPED WHAT THEY WERE DOING AND WERE LISTENING IN STUNNED ASTONISHMENT. I ONLY KNEW THAT I WAS GOING TO MAKE THEM EAT THEIR WORDS!

THAT'S IT! STICK UP FOR HER! A LIAR DEFENDS A CHEAT! YOU'RE WORSE THAN SHE IS! EVERYTHING YOU'VE TOLD ME HAS BEEN A LIE! GO AHEAD... YOU HAVE HER NOW! HAPPY BIRTHDAY, VICTOR!



ROMANTIC STORY

I WANTED TO SEE YOUR EYES LIGHT UP, KNOWING YOU WOULDN'T BE EXPECTING IT TODAY OF ALL DAYS! TAKE YOUR RING, MY **DARLING** WIFE... YOU'VE **EARNED** IT! NOW, WISH ME A **HAPPY BIRTHDAY**...



RUNNING TO THE BEDROOM, I FLUNG MYSELF ON THE BED, SHAKING WITH BURNING SHAME! MY JEALOUSY HAD HURT TWO INNOCENT PEOPLE. BUT MOST OF ALL, IT HAD DESTROYED OUR LOVE! I SOBBED BROKEN-HEARTEDLY, WISHING I COULD MAKE AMENDS. THEN VICTOR'S GENTLE VOICE SOUNDED BEHIND ME!

THIS WAS WHY I WAS LATE, MONEY. THAT'S WHY I WORKED LATE NIGHTS. IT'S YOUR RING, DEAR. I LOVE YOU!



HOW CAN YOU STILL SAY THAT, VICTOR? HOW... CAN YOU LOOK AT ME... AFTER WHAT I DID?

BECAUSE YOU'RE MY **WIFE**! BECAUSE NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, I'LL NEVER STOP LOVING YOU. I THINK MAY AND EVERYONE WILL FORGET ABOUT THIS INCIDENT.. THAT IS.. IF YOU WILL!



I STARED AT THE RING VICTOR HAD HURLED AT ME, THE RING THAT NOW LAY AT MY FEET. I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES! I BEGAN TO TREMBLE.. THE ROOM SWAYED... "HAPPY BIRTHDAY...! MY DARLING WIFE...!" MOCKING VOICES CRIED "HAPPY BIRTHDAY... HAPPY BIRTHDAY.."



OH, DEAREST.. HOLD ME CLOSE. I'VE BEEN A BLIND FOOL! FORGET IT? IT NEVER HAPPENED!



AND AS VICTOR SLIPPED THE RING ON MY FINGER, I KNEW MY JEALOUSY HAD BEEN KILLED FOR EVER! NOW I HAD OUR BOND OF ETERNAL LOVE!



HEARTS AHOY



SUSAN BLAKE stood behind the counter at the ticket office of the Marston World Tours Company and made out tickets to distant places she had never seen. From time to time she glanced up at the big travel posters on the walls that showed glowing emerald jungles in South America, high, refreshing mountains in the French Alps, low, rolling downs in England and balmy fields in Bermuda. Susan sighed.

Then as her best friend, June Warren, came out of the boss' office, Susan pouted slightly.

June, she reminded herself, was wearing her boy friend's birthday gift, a beautiful silver pin showing a clipper ship under full sail. June's birthday had been last week. Susan's was today, and, so far, she hadn't even gotten a card from Hank Richards, her fiancée.

Susan handed a ticket-slip to a customer and glanced down at her engagement ring. Again she sighed. It had taken Hank a whole month to get it for her after he'd popped the question. Hank's forgetfulness was notorious, she decided, her anger rising like the mercury in a thermometer.

"Susan—happy birthday," June said. "Sorry I couldn't give this to you earlier, but I've been taking dictation from Mr. Marston all morning and most of the afternoon."

She handed Susan a flat box of handkerchiefs, tied with a ribbon.

"Why, they're beautiful, June!" Sue exclaimed in appreciation. "Thanks ever so much."

"You got my card, didn't you?" June asked. "And by the way, Joe asked to be remembered to you also."

"That's awfully sweet of the two of you," Sue said. She gazed wistfully out of the window. "Gosh, I wish I could get Hank to set the date. You and Joe already know when you're getting married."

"October first," June said briskly. "And not a day later. Joe's so thoughtful. He's already bought all the furniture, and we're picking out an apartment in a housing project for vets this Saturday. Too bad Hank's so busy."

"Busy!" Sue said scornfully. "He's just absent-minded and thoughtless. If I didn't love him, I'd . . ." She paused, swallowed and went on. "Well, I guess I won't be seeing your apartment until I get back from my vacation. It starts Friday."

"Picked any place to go?"

Sue fumed. "Well, originally, I thought I'd just stay home and save the money for our wedding and just see Hank in the evenings, but he hasn't mentioned a word. His vacation's in a month and—oh, it's just a mess!"

The front door of the big ticket office opened and closed. June scurried off, nodding. "Hi, Hank!", she called, then winked back at Sue.

Sue's heart began pounding. Hank was so handsome, she thought. If only—well, she'd give him a chance to show he wasn't so forgetful and careless. It was almost quitting time and he might have remembered her birthday by now. Maybe he'd been planning a surprise.

Hank seemed in a hurry. "Sue," he began breathlessly. "I can't see you tonight. Got to get some paper work out for the boss!" He leaned over the counter, squeezed her hand and abruptly turned away.

"Hank!" Sue said mournfully.

"Huh? What?" he asked impatiently. "Gosh, don't slow me down, Sue."

"Haven't you forgotten something?" she asked.

"Forgotten? Huh?" His face was bewildered, then it cleared. "Oh, you mean a kiss." He looked around. "No can do. Customers coming in. After all, it was your idea not to kiss in public." He whirled. "Bye—see you tomorrow."

Sue's right foot tapped the floor dangerously. Well, she thought, this was a little too much! No card. No present. She knew it wasn't what he'd give her, because on her own initiative they'd decided to spend very little on each other's birthdays and put the money saved away for the wedding. It was the principle of the thing that bothered her.

Sue's face wrinkled in a deep frown. Even
(continued on inside back cover)

Hearts Ahoj

(Continued from inside front cover)

her own best friend, even her best friend's boy friend, had remembered her birthday. But not her fiancée!

Seething, she attended to the customers that had come in, closed and locked the door after they'd gone, with tickets for the Riviera. The Riviera! She'd never get to a place like that, she decided. She'd be lucky if Hank took her to Niagara Falls for a honeymoon.

She opened her ticket drawer, preparatory to locking it, and sorted through the tickets. Then Sue gasped.

She picked up the ticket stubs and looked at them, her heart sinking. Apparently, she decided, they'd been made out by the relief girl who came on at lunch time. And both were signed by Hank Richards.

Tears welled into her eye as she saw the destination and the date of sailing: Bermuda on the following Monday! That could only mean one thing—Hank had bought a ticket for himself and for some other girl and was probably planning to elope with her with Sue safely away from the office and out of the way. Then she sobbed. So that was the explanation of why Hank had gotten so much more forgetful than usual. It also explained why he'd forgotten her birthday. Only another woman could cause a man to do things like that. Probably Hank had been seeing the other girl on all those evenings he'd claimed he was busy at home with office paper work.

Sue's tears dried suddenly. Her face hardened. After all, she thought, it was no more than she deserved for trusting a man who didn't deserve trust. She should have been smarter, she thought, been more suspicious at Hank's actions. Well, she wouldn't make a mistake like that twice! For an instant, she thought of waiting until morning, then hurling the ring back in Hank's face. Then she started crying again. She knew she couldn't do that. He was heartless, she knew, a betrayer, but that didn't mean she had to be. Besides, love with her couldn't be turned off like a faucet, even if his was false.

She looked up, her eyes blurred with tears. The front door was opening. She raised a hand to point meaningfully to the clock, then dropped it suddenly.

"Sue!" It was Hank. "Still here? It's after closing time."

"What are you doing back?" she asked frostily.

"Came back to pick up some work I'd forgotten."

"Here," she said, putting more icicles in her voice. "Here's your ring."

"Ring?" he asked, puzzledly. "Oh, the engagement ring. What's the matter with it, does it need cleaning? It was brand new when I bought it six months ago."

"Why . . ."

"And, that reminds me," he said. "We're getting married Saturday. Remind us to go down to City Hall tomorrow at lunch time for the license. I'm so busy I'm liable to forget it."

"M—Marriage license?" she gasped. "A wedding?"

"Sure," he said. "Oh, I forgot to tell you, sweetheart," He paused. "While you were out to lunch I bought two tickets for us for the honeymoon. You said you liked the Riviera or Bermuda, and we couldn't afford the Riviera, so it's Bermuda. You'd better pack the rest of the week, while you're at it."

"B—Bermuda? Marriage? Honeymoon?" she gasped. "But how can you go on a honeymoon with me? Your vacation doesn't come . . ."

"Yes it does," he said. "The boss said I could take my vacation the same time as yours if I got enough paper work done in advance. That's why I've had to work so hard lately. Gee, Sue, sweet, I've been so busy lately doing a dozen things at once I haven't had time to tell you anything. You must think I'm a cad or . . ."

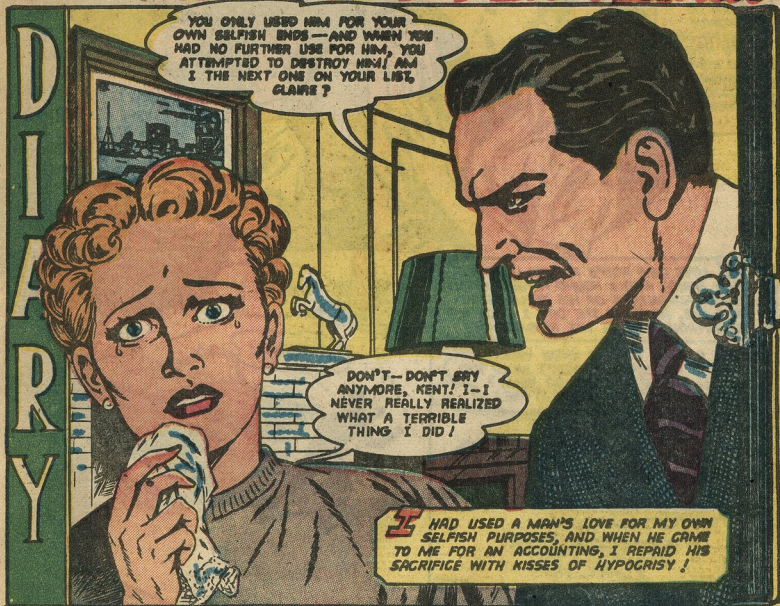
"I THINK you're a darling," she said, kissing him. "You may be forgetful, but you never forgot the most important thing of all next to the fact that I love you—that you love me!" She smiled. "I'll even forgive you for not remembering my birthday."

"Didn't forget it," he said, hurrying away, but blowing back a kiss. "I just didn't have time to get you anything worthwhile. I remembered you're subject to seasickness, so I mailed you a bottle of remedy with a birthday card. You'll get it at home in the last mail today." He blew her another kiss. "Bye—see you on your honeymoon!"

THE END

ROMANTIC STORY

IT CAN'T HAPPEN AGAIN



ONLY YOU, DEAR DIARY, KNOW HOW ONE-SIDED MY ROMANCE WITH ROD WAS! HOW WELL I KNEW HE WORSHIPPED THE VERY GROUND I WALKED ON! BUT TRY AS I COULD, I COULDN'T RECIPROGATE! ROD WAS SWEET-GENEROUS AND ADORING--BUT THE RECIPROCAL SPARK WASN'T THERE!



ROMANTIC STORY

I WATCHED HIS EYES FILL WITH TENDER EMOTION, DIARY, AND THEN HE SLOWLY PULLED ME TO HIM AND HIS LIPS HUNGRILY SOUGHT MINE!



WHERE --- YOU TOOK MY BREATH AWAY!

THERE ISN'T ANYTHING I WOULDN'T DO FOR YOU, DARLING!



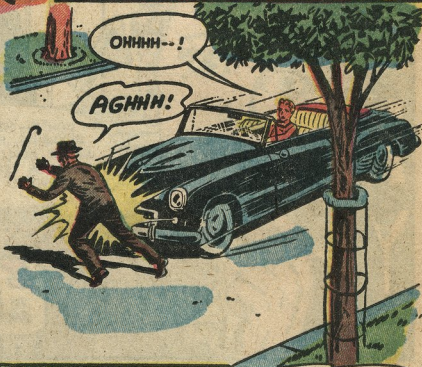
A LOVE LIKE ROD'S INVITES LIBERTIES, DEAR DIARY, AND I FOUND MYSELF OFTEN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS FEELINGS TOWARD ME, AS I DID THE DAY I TOOK HIS CAR WITHOUT ASKING HIS PERMISSION!

IT'S A GOOD THING I KNEW WHERE HIS CAR KEY WAS! HE WON'T MIND TOO MUCH! AND IF HE DOES, SO WHAT? ROD COULDN'T BE ANGRY AT ME!



OHhhh--!

AGHHH!



I WASN'T THINKING RATIONALLY ANYMORE! ALL I KNEW WAS THAT I HAD TO GET AWAY -- TO GET RID OF THE CAR! I QUICKLY DROVE IT BACK TO THE GARAGE AND CAME HOME! BUT A FEW HOURS LATER, A RADIO REPORT MADE ME SIGH WITH DREAD!

JAIL --! NO--NO!
I'LL DIE FIRST!



I HIT HIM--!
I HIT HIM!

...AND THE POLICE ARE SEEKING THE HIT AND RUN DRIVER WHO STRUCK THE ELDERLY MR. CANNOTY AND FLED FROM THE SCENE! PART OF THE LICENSE NUMBER WAS SEEN BY A PASSER-BY...

THEY'LL FIND ME! THEY'LL SEND ME TO JAIL!



ROMANTIC STORY

The TERRIBLE BURDEN OF WHAT I HAD DONE WAS TOO MUCH TO BEAR ALONE, DIARY, AND I WENT TO ROD AND SOBBED OUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED! HE LISTENED IN SNOGGED SILENCE!

BUT WHY DIDN'T YOU STOP? WHY DIDN'T YOU GO BACK AND HELP THE MAN?

DON'T LET THEM DO IT, ROD! I-- I'LL DIE THERE! SOMEONE SAW THE CAR'S LICENSE AND IT'S GOING TO BE TRACED! BUT THEY DON'T KNOW YET THAT I-- WAS -- DRIVING -- IT!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WANT! BUT HELP ME--! I--I CAN'T GO THROUGH WITH IT! YOU ONCE SAID YOU'D DO ANYTHING FOR ME--!

YOU WANT ME TO SAY THAT I WAS DRIVING THE CAR-- IS THAT IT?

I MEANT IT, CLAIRE!

I BECAME FRIGHTENED! WITH THIS SAFETY CAMPAIGN ON, THEY'LL SEND ME TO JAIL!

YOU--YOU MEAN YOU'LL SAY IT WAS YOU--?

YES, DEAR! I'LL DO THAT-- AND MORE FOR YOU! THAT'S HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU!

OH ROD-- ROD--! I'LL NEVER FORGET IT!

AND FOR WILFULLY LEAVING THE SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT, I SENTENCE YOU TO A YEAR IN THE COUNTY JAIL!

A YEAR! I WOULD HAVE HAD TO STAY IN JAIL FOR A YEAR--!

KEEP YOUR CHIN UP, DEAR! A YEAR! ISN'T A LIFETIME!

I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU WHEN YOU COME OUT, DARLING!

SOON AFTER, THE CAR WAS TRACED TO ROD'S DOOR, AND WHEN THEY PICKED HIM UP HE CONFESSED THAT HE WAS DRIVING! THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WERE A REAL ORDEAL FOR ME! IT WAS AS IF I WAS ON TRIAL! AND THE DAY THEY SENTENCED HIM--

ROMANTIC STORY

IN THE PASSING MONTHS MY APPREHENSION WANED, DEAR DIARY, AND SIX MONTHS HAD ALMOST PASSED WHEN FATE INTERVENED TO BRING KENT TO MY HOUSE!

THIS IS MY DAUGHTER, CLAIRE! KENT HAS JUST BEEN TRANSFERRED TO MY OFFICE BRANCH, DEAR, AND I THOUGHT HE COULD USE A HOME-COOKED DINNER FOR A CHANGE!

I DON'T THINK YOU TALKED ENOUGH ABOUT YOUR DAUGHTER, MR. MORGAN! NOW I KNOW I'M GOING TO LIKE THIS TOWN!



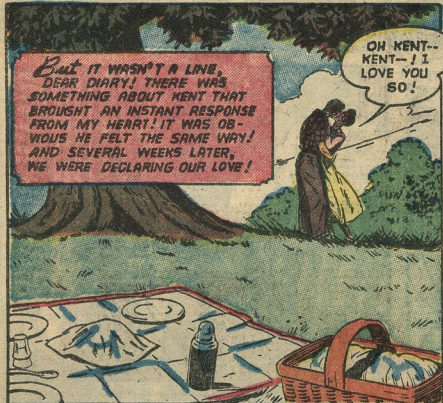
IS THAT A LINE YOU RESERVE FOR SMALL-TOWN GIRLS, KENT?

THERE'S NOTHING SMALL-TOWN ABOUT YOU, I'D SAY!



But it wasn't a line, dear diary! There was something about Kent that brought an instant response from my heart! It was obvious he felt the same way! And several weeks later, we were declaring our love!

OH KENT-- KENT--! I LOVE YOU SO!



DO YOU KNOW YOU HAVE STARDUST IN YOUR EYES?

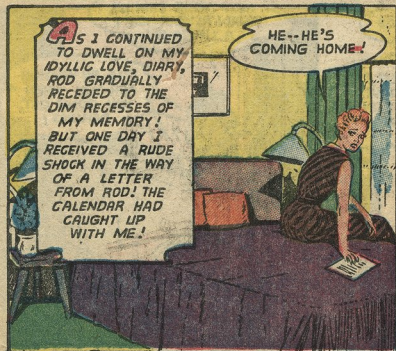
AND YOU'RE THE MAN WHO PUT IT THERE!



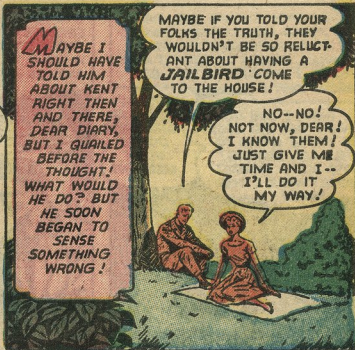
I HAD ALMOST FORGOTTEN THAT ONE DAY HE'D BE OUT! B-BUT THERE'S KENT NOW! WHAT--WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

AS I CONTINUED TO DWELL ON MY IDYLIC LOVE, DIARY, ROD GRADUALLY RECESSED TO THE DIM RECESSES OF MY MEMORY! BUT ONE DAY I RECEIVED A RUDE SHOCK IN THE WAY OF A LETTER FROM ROD! THE CALENDAR HAD CAUGHT UP WITH ME!

HE--HE'S COMING HOME!



ROMANTIC STORY



ROMANTIC STORY

WITH EACH PASSING DAY, DIARY, I FOUND MYSELF BEING HEMMED IN BY AN IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION! FINALLY, UNABLE TO BEAR IT ANY MORE, I DECIDED TO TELL ROD ABOUT KENT!

I THINK I CAN GUESS WHAT THIS BIG SECRET IS YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME, DARLING! IT'S ALL I THOUGHT ABOUT WHILE I WAS AWAY!

LET'S GET YOUR CAR AND DRIVE OUT TO PLUM MEADOW!



I'M NOT ALLOWED TO DRIVE A CAR! THEY REVOKED MY LICENSE-- AND IF I WAS CAUGHT BEHIND A WHEEL IT WOULD MEAN ANOTHER JAIL SENTENCE!

OH-- I HAD FORGOTTEN!



BUT WHAT HE HAD SAID MADE ME FALTER IN MY RESOLUTION, AND A NEW IDEA BORN OUT OF DESPERATION WAS GROWING AT ME!

I'LL DRIVE, ROD! GET THE CAR AND LET ME TAKE THE WHEEL!

OKAY! PLUM MEADOW IT IS!



ALL I KNEW WAS THAT I COULDN'T TELL HIM ABOUT KENT; BUT IF I COULD GET HIM OUT OF MY LIFE, DEAR DIARY... THAT WOULD SOLVE EVERYTHING! SO, SOON AFTER WE STARTED OUT, I PUT MY WILD PLAN INTO EXECUTION!

CLAIRE--! WHAT'S THE MATTER?

I--I FEEL FAINT--!



YOU BETTER TAKE THE WHEEL AND DRIVE ME HOME! I--I FEEL DIZZY--! I THINK I NEED A DOCTOR!

BUT-- B-BUT--! ALL RIGHT, HON! GET IN!



I KNEW MY SHAM ACT AND HIS REAL CONCERN WOULD LEAVE HIM NO ALTERNATIVE, AND AS WE SLOWLY STARTED BACK TO THE HOUSE...

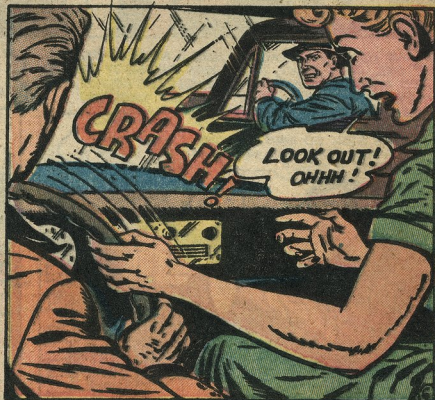
FEELING ANY BETTER?

NO! JUST SLOW DOWN-- A-LITTLE-- BIT--!



CRASH!

LOOK OUT! OHHH!



ROMANTIC STORY

The ACCIDENT CREATED A HUBBUB AND BROUGHT A POLICEMAN ON THE RUN! WHEN ROD COULDN'T PRODUCE A DRIVER'S LICENSE, DIARY, THE ANGRY MURMUR OF THE CROWD TOLD ME THAT MY PLAN WAS RAPIDLY TAKING SHAPE!

I'M GIVING YOU A SUMMONS, YOUNG FELLOW, AND YOU'RE TO APPEAR IN COURT IN TWO DAYS FOR DRIVING WITHOUT A LICENSE AND RECKLESSNESS!

I'M SORRY, DEAR! BUT I THOUGHT I SAW SOME MAN ABOUT TO STEP IN FRONT OF THE CAR AND I LOST MY HEAD!

I'M IN A BAD SPOT, DEAR! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS? WHEN THE JUDGE FINDS OUT I BROKE MY PAROLE, THEY MIGHT EVEN SEND ME BACK TO JAIL!

THAT WAS MY CUE! EXACTLY WHAT I HAD ATTEMPTED TO MANEUVER HIM INTO!

NO--NO! I WON'T LET THEM SEND YOU BACK! LEAVE TOWN, ROD! GO SOMEPLACE WHERE THEY CAN'T FIND YOU!

YOU'RE ASKING ME TO RUN AWAY?

YES--ANYTHING--EXCEPT GOING BACK TO JAIL! I'LL JOIN YOU WHEN IT'S SAFE!

IT HAD ALL SEEMED SO EASY AND LOGICAL WHEN I PLANNED IT! HE'D GO AWAY AND EVENTUALLY HE'D FORGET ABOUT ME--MEET SOMEONE ELSE! BUT WHAT HE SAID MADE ME GAPE IN DISMAY!

NO, CLAIRE--I'M NOT RUNNING AWAY! IT SOLVES NOTHING! IF YOU HAD STOPPED AND FACED THE MUSIC WHEN YOU HIT THAT OLD MAN, IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN NECESSARY FOR ME TO SERVE YOUR JAIL SENTENCE! IT WAS YOUR IDEA TO RUN! NOT THIS TIME, THOUGH!

BUT THEY'LL PUT YOU IN JAIL!

NOT IF WE TELL THEM THE TRUTH! NOT IF WE TELL THEM YOU WERE SICK AND I HAD TO TAKE THE WHEEL--THAT IT WAS YOU WHO CAUSED THE ACCIDENT! IF YOU REALLY LOVED ME--THAT WOULD BE YOUR FIRST THOUGHT!

YOU KNOW I DO LOVE YOU, ROD--AND I'M GRATEFUL FOR ALL YOU DID! BUT IT'S TOO LATE NOW!

IS IT, CLAIRE?

EVEN BEFORE I WHIRLED AROUND TO SEE HIM STARING UP AT US, I KNEW IT WAS...

KENT!

MAYBE IT'S TIME WE ALL LEARNED WHO YOU REALLY DO LOVE! AND MAYBE IT'S TIME YOU TOLD ME HOW THIS MAN CAME TO SERVE A JAIL SENTENCE FOR YOU!

ROMANTIC STORY

I WAS OUT IN THE OPEN NOW, DIARY, AND IT WAS USELESS TO TRY AND COVER UP MY DIRTY PLANS! I BOBBED OUT THE WHOLE STORY!

I—I DIDN'T KNOW I'D FALL IN LOVE WITH HENT WHILE YOU WERE AWAY!

SO YOU SET OUT TO COMPLETELY DESTROY ME! THAT FAINTING ACT—THE ACCIDENT TONIGHT, IT WAS ALL PART OF YOUR PLAN TO GET RID OF ME!



IT'S TRUE, ISN'T IT? EVERYTHING HE SAID IS TRUE? ANSWER ME! I CAN SEE IN YOUR FACE IT IS! WE'RE THROUGH!

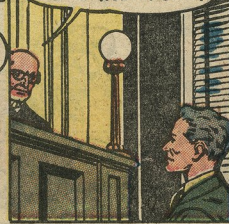


ALL THE TEARS AND ANGUISH THE NEXT FEW DAYS DIDN'T EASE THE PAIN IN MY HEART! BUT I KNEW THERE WAS NO GOING BACK! HENT WAS GONE! IN A FEELS ATTEMPT TO MAKE SOME AMENDS, I WENT TO ROO'S COURT HEARING AND TOLD EVERYTHING!

AND THIS YOUNG MAN WENT TO RAIL ON YOUR ACCOUNT! WHAT A STRANGE WAY YOU HAD OF SHOWING YOUR GRATITUDE! I COULD SENTENCE YOU BUT I'M OF THE OPINION THAT YOUR CONSCIENCE WILL EXACT ITS OWN PUNISHMENT!



I'M DISMISSING THE CASE AGAINST YOU! THE GIRL WILL NATURALLY PAY THE DAMAGES! NEXT TIME SEE THAT THE PERSON YOU GIVE YOUR LOVE TO IS WORTHY OF IT!



I LEFT THE COURTROOM AWARE OF THE CONTEMPTUOUS GLANCES DIRECTED AT ME, BUT THE JUDGE WAS RIGHT! I AM PAYING FOR WHAT I DID—PAYING WITH INTEREST...

MAYBE THIS WILL END SOME DAY—AND I'LL FIND MY WAY TO LOVE AND HAPPINESS! I'LL LIVE ON THAT HOPE!



The End

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ROMANTIC STORY



MAYBE I WAS FOOLISH FOR BEING BORED WITH LIFE IN MAYVILLE, BUT BEFORE I MARRIED CHET BARKER, THIS WAS **ONE** SCHOOL TEACHER WHO INTENDED SEEING THE WORLD... IF ONLY FOR A FEW MONTHS! CHET, OF COURSE, WAS ANNOYED WITH ME... BUT HIS KISSES WERE STILL AS SWEET.

YOU'RE COMING BACK TO ME, HEAR? THIS WHOLE IDEA OF YOURS IS SILLY!

MAYBE IT IS, DEAR... BUT AT LEAST I'LL NEVER COMPLAIN THAT I DIDN'T SEE OR DO ANYTHING FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE! GOODBYE!



CHET WAS A RICH MAN... AND YOUNG... HE WAS MAYVILLE, AND PERHAPS I **WAS** BEING FOOLISH IN PUTTING OFF OUR MARRIAGE. BUT I WAS DETERMINED TO HAVE MY WAY.

I YEARNED FOR ADVENTURE... ROMANCE... EXCITEMENT... BUT I DIDN'T THINK LIFE COULD BE SO ROUGH AND BRUTAL AS IT WAS IN KADENCE! I HAD UNWITTINGLY PICKED A MINING TOWN WITH DIRECT, CRUDE MANNERS AND WAYS...

I TRIED STEPPING OUT OF HIS WAY... BUT THE MAN BLOCKED ME AND PULLED ME INTO HIS ARMS. AND THEN...

I HOPE KADENCE IS A FINE TOWN! TEACHING SCHOOL THERE FOR A FEW MONTHS SHOULD BE A WELCOME CHANGE!

HEY THERE! HOW'S ABOUT A KISS?

I'LL IGNORE THEM. OH-H... ONE OF THEM IS COMING TOWARDS ME!

THAT'S ENOUGH, MILDANE! TRY APOLOGIZING TO THE LADY!

Ugh!



BUT THINKING MY RESCUER PROVED TO BE JUST AS FRUITLESS, FOR I HAD ONLY BEEN A PRIZE FOR THE VICTOR!

LET ME GO! OH-H-H... YOU BRUTE! YOU CRUDE BRUTE!

THE NAME IS VICTOR HALL, MISS... AND OF COURSE YOU'RE OUR NEW SCHOOLTEACHER, AND IT SO HAPPENS THAT YOU'RE GOING TO **MARRY ME!**

I THOUGHT HE WAS CRAZY! BUT SOMETHING KEPT NAGGING AT MY MIND... A SOMETHING I DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT COULD BE VICTOR HALL. IN KADENCE, IT SEEMED THE RULE OF "MIGHT MAKING RIGHT" WORKED WONDERS... AND TO VICTOR, FOREMAN OF A CONSTRUCTION GANG IN TOWN, THIS APPLIED AS WELL. THEN, WHEN I SAW HIM AGAIN AT THE TOWN'S ONLY DANCE ONE SATURDAY NIGHT...

I LOVE YOU, RITA. I MEAN IT. STAY HERE WITH ME!

YOU'RE HOPELESS, VICTOR! NOW LET ME GO... THIS VERY INSTANT!



ROMANTIC STORY

BUT VICTOR PERSISTED UNTIL I KNEW THAT I HAD LOST MY HEART TO HIM. THE WEEKS FLEW BY IN RADIANT BLISS.. FOR VICTOR WAS MINE TO CHERISH AS MY VERY OWN...

WHY CAN'T YOU BE GENTLE AND DIFFERENT THAN THE OTHERS, DEAR? MUST YOU ALWAYS CRUSH SOMEONE WITH YOUR FISTS? WON'T YOU TRY TO CHANGE.. FOR ME?

ALL RIGHT, HONEY. YOU WIN!



BUT VICTOR ALWAYS BROKE HIS PROMISES: FOR ONE DAY, AS A MINER STOPPED TO TALK TO ME...

GET LOST, BORGMAN! DON'T EVER LET ME CATCH YOU AROUND MISS RITA AGAIN!

LEAVE HIM ALONE.. YOU VICIOUS BRUTE! I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN YOU COULD NEVER CHANGE!



SO I FLED BACK TO MAYVILLE... AWAY FROM THE TOUGH, FRONTIER CRUDENESS OF VICTOR HALL. CHET AND I ANNOUNCED OUR ENGAGEMENT, AND I RESIGNED MYSELF TO A LIFE OF QUIET AND ROUTINE ACTIVITY. UNTIL ONE NIGHT.. AT A LOCAL PARTY...

RITA.. THIS IS VICTOR HALL.. HE'S GOING TO SETTLE DOWN HERE AND START A BUSINESS! I'M HELPING TO GET HIM SET UP!

OH NO! IT.. IT CAN'T BE!

HELLO, RITA!



I LASHED OUT AT VICTOR WHEN WE WERE ALONE, BUT MY HEART WAS SICK AND STUNNED. WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO ME... WHY WAS I SO UPSET?

YOU NEVER LET ME EXPLAIN WHY I HIT BORGMAN. HE HAS A TERRIBLE REPUTATION WITH GIRLS IN KADENCE. HE CERTAINLY WAS UP TO NO GOOD WITH YOU.. AND I DO REALLY LOVE YOU, RITA. I'M WILLING TO BE ANYTHING YOU WANT ME TO BE!

IT'S TOO LATE, VICTOR!



BUT FATE HAD ANOTHER ENDING FOR ME, FOR WHEN CHET GOT ME ALONE LATER...

I'M PLAYING THIS GUY FOR A SUCKER, RITA. I'LL TAKE EVERY PENNY HE HAS... PLAY UP TO HIM AND IT'LL BE MUCH EASIER!

CHET! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND? YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT!



THE MAN I ADMIRERD... CHET BARKER, THE RESPECTED, HONEST BUSINESS-MAN, WAS NOTHING BUT A CHEAT. IF I AGREED WITH HIM, HERE WAS MY REVENGE ON VICTOR. BUT...

LISTEN EVERYONE, CHET BARKER IS A PHONY! HE PLANNED TO CHEAT MISTER HALL OUT OF HIS SAVINGS. I'M ANNOUNCING THE END OF OUR ENGAGEMENT!

RITA.. YOU'RE SURE... ABSOLUTELY SURE?



I'VE LEARNED, AT LAST, THAT IT ISN'T LOOKS OR MANNERS THAT MAKE A MAN... BUT HIS HEART!

THEN WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? THE PREACHER IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER!



I KNEW AT LAST THAT I HAD FOUND THE ONE TRUE SECRET TO HAPPINESS!

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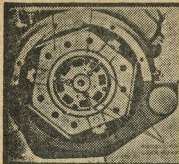
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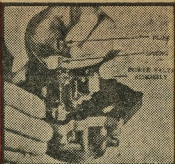




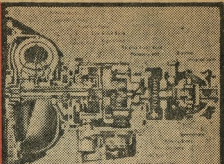
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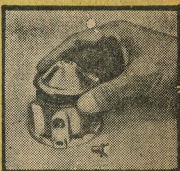
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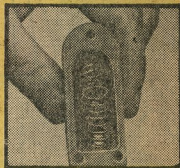
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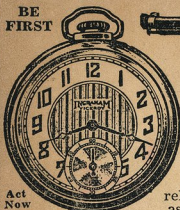
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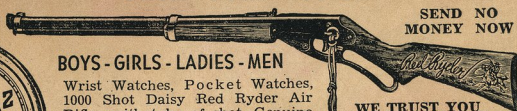
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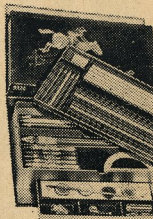
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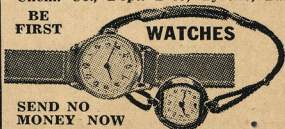


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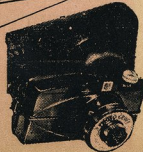
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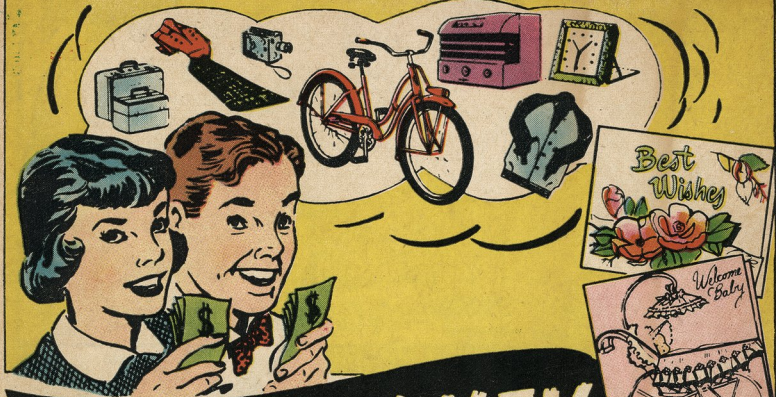
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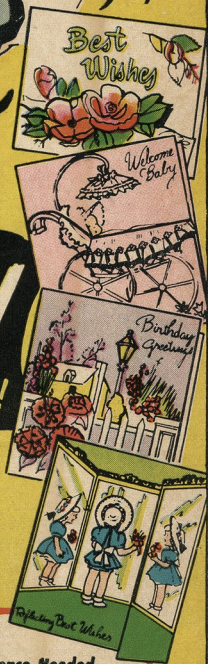
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